

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5033
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4248

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, US
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: SITUATION IN MERJAYOUN

1. GREEK CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF SOUTH LEBANON ATHANASIOS SHA'ER, WHO IS RESIDENT IN MERJAYOUN, CALLED ON ME MORNING AUGUST 26 TO DISCUSS SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH, CONTRARY TO OUR EARLIER REPORTS, THERE ARE NO PALESTINIANS OCCUPYING ANY PORTION OF MERJAYOUN, CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE IN THAT VILLAGE IS DESPERATE. THEY ARE CUT OFF FROM ACCESS TO THE REST OF LEBANON, THEIR HOUSES ARE BEING DESTROYED IN DAILY ARTILLERY EXCHANGES AND THEY ARE APPROACHING WINTER WITHOUT FOOD SUPPLIES, WITHOUT GLASS IN THEIR WINDOWS OR DOORS ON THEIR HOUSES. THERE ARE NO SCHOOLS AND NO CLERGY, HE BEING THE ONLY PRIEST LEFT IN TOWN (WHICH IS LARGELY GREEK ORTHODOX AND GREEK CATHOLIC). ICRC CONVEYS GET THROUGH FROM TIME TO TIME BUT ARE ABLE TO DO VERY LITTLE. THE LAST TIME HE LEFT MERJAYOUN HE HAD TO WALK FOR FOUR HOURS THROUGH THE WOODS. THIS TIME HE WENT ALONG THE FEDAYEEN TRAIL.

2. HE SAID THAT MAJOR GEORGE SAAD HADDAD HAD TOLD HIM HE REPRESENTED LEGITIMACY IN LEBANON AND PRESIDENT SARKIS WAS
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A HIRELING OF THE SYRIANS AND HAD BEEN ELECTED WITH SYRIAN MONEY. HADDAD SAID HE TOOK HIS ORDERS FROM THE LEBANESE FRONT, BUT SHA'ER SAID HE IS TOTALLY ARMED AND EQUIPPED BY ISRAEL.

3. I ASKED SHA'ER WHO, IN HIS VIEW, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INITIATING THE ARTILLERY EXCHANGES. HE SAID IT WAS LARGELY THE PALESTINIANS NOT THE ISRAELIS OR CHRISTIANS.

HE COMPLAINED BITTERLY, HOWEVER, THAT ISRAEL DID NOT COME OVER, TAKE KHAM AND CHASE THE PALESTINIANS OUT OF THE AREA. WHEN HE HAD URGED SUCH ACTIONS ON VISITING ISRAELI OFFICERS THEY REMAINED SILENT. THEY HAD, HOWEVER, OFFERED TO TAKE HIM TO SEE BEGIN.

4. COMMENT: ABOVE REFLECTS RISING TIDE OF ANTI-PALESTINIAN SENTIMENT IN SOUTH, DEVELOPMENT REGARDING WHICH PALESTINIANS ARE SHOWING INCREASING SENSITIVITY. IT UNDOUBTEDLY IS A FACTOR IN PLO DESIRE TO ARRANGE CEASE-FIRE AND WITHDRAWAL.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

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